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ABSTRACT

This document describes the state-mandated Entry-Year Assistance Program established in Oklahoma in 1980. A teacher education graduate receives a one-year license rather than the standard five-year credential. When the beginning teacher is hired, an Entry-Year Assistance Committee (EYAC) is formed. This committee is composed of the building principal, an experienced teacher, and a teacher education representative, usually from the institution that prepared the beginning teacher. The EYAC assists and advised the beginning teacher and each member of the committee makes two independent observations. Observations and recommendations are discussed with the novice teacher. Another observation is made before the spring meeting of the committee, at which time the EYAC votes either to recommend the new teacher for full certification or for an additional year in the program. An evaluation of the program's effectiveness is presented and some recommendations are made for improvements. A sample of the observation instrument used by the EYAC is attached. (JD)

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A STATE ENTRY-YEAR TEACHER PROGRAM AND TEACHER EDUCATION

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A State Entry-Year Teacher Program and Teacher Education

After experiencing a decade of the educational reform movement with its many charges, challenges, and demands, and the various responses to these, some educators are pausing to assess the situation and attempt to determine the status of education in the nation, state, or local community. This is occurring in Oklahoma as it is elsewhere, and it is the intent of this paper to examine one of the responses of this state: the Entry-Year Assistance Program.

The Oklahoma legislature enacted House Bill 1706 in 1980 which created the Entry-Year Assistance Program. This program called for the establishment of Entry-Year Assistance Committees to work with all beginning teachers in Oklahoma. It was a state effort to improve the teacher induction process.

These committees function to expedite and enhance the professional development of new teachers, Additionally, they are to identify and retain effective beginning teachers, to identify and improve or help remove the ineffective ones, to recommend areas for improvement for staff development during the second year of teaching, and to help schools of education be more aware of the first-year performance of the teachers they prepare.

In the new program a teacher candidate proceeds through the preparation phase in the accustomed manner, but then the difference begins between becoming a teacher in Oklahoma and elsewhere. The teacher graduate in Oklahoma who has met all the usual criteria to be certified to teach in the state receives a one-year license rather than the standard five-year credential. This teacher-to-be seeks employment, is hired, and the Entry-Year Assistance Program Program then begins.

When a school district hires a beginning teacher, the superintendent activates the program by beginning the process of forming an Entry-Year Assistance Committee (EYAC). This committee is composed of three persons: an administrator in the employing district -- usually the building principal, an experienced teacher in the school district -- in the content area and usually in the building and grade level(s) of the beginning teacher, and a teacher education representative -- usually from the institution that prepared the beginning teacher, especially when the school district is within geographical proximity of that institution.

The superintendent appoints the administrator for the committee, notifies the preparing school or college of education for their representative, and asks the local bargaining unit or teacher association to select a teacher consultant according to Oklahoma Department of Education guidelines. These initiating actions are to occur within the first ten working days after the beginning teacher enters the classroom, and

the EYAC should hold its first meeting within the first 20 teaching days.

At the first EYAC meeting, the committee members and the beginning teacher become acquainted. They elect a chairperson and establish a schedule for that school year. The committee members will make two independent observations within the next 30-100 teaching days, and after the second one, they will complete an observation instrument (see Appendix).

After these activities, the EYAC has its second meeting, usually in December. At this time they discuss their observations and recommendations with the new teacher, and the committee chair and the beginning teacher sign the observation instrument. The beginning teacher receives a copy of all the completed instruments at that time and the remaining copy at the spring or third meeting which occurs sometime after April 10.

Before the spring meeting, each committee member makes at least one more observation and completes another evaluation instrument. The third committee meeting is similar to the second but has one or two additional functions. The EYAC votes to recommend the beginning teacher for full certification or for an additional year in the Entry-Year Assistance Program. They also may recommend a faculty development plan for the teacher for the next year.

The EYAC serves for one year, and the beginning teacher must have been employed for at least 120 teaching days by the end of the

school year. If the beginning teacher is employed for less than 120 days, the EYAC will continue to function with the entry-year teacher during the next school year until 180 working days have been completed.

If a second year is recommended, a different EYAC may be, and usually is, formed for the second year. At the end of the second year, the EYAC must vote for full certification or for noncertification. Full certification is a standard, five-year credential. When recommending either a second year in the program or noncertification, the entry-year teacher may ask the EYAC to supply a list of reasons for their decision(s). These reasons are to remain confidential except as otherwise provided by the entry-year teacher.

The Entry-Year Assistance Program became fully operational during the 1982-1983 school year. Since that time there has been an average of about thirteen hundred beginning teachers and Entry-Year Assistance Committees functioning each year.

During the first five years of operation, approximately one hundred entry-year teachers were recommended for a second year of assistance. And during these five years, about one hundred per year resigned or were hired late and carried over into the following school year.

Two of the authors of this paper, Price and Paschall, did a follow-up study in 1988 regarding the Entry-Year Assistance Program in the East Central University region of the state. When asked whether the EYAC program had improved the process of inducting new teachers into their

school and into the profession of teaching, eighty percent of the principals surveyed said yes, seven percent said no, two percent were neutral, and eleven percent were in the no response category.

When asked if the implementation of the EYAC program, and their involvement with it, had influenced their work as a principal and their school in any way, positively or negatively, regarding research findings of the effective school (list provided: Oklahoma Department of Education, 1984, p.26), the responses were more equivocal. Using a scale of -2 (much negative effect), -1 (some negative effect), 0 (no effect), +1 (some positive effect), and +2 (much positive effect), the result was +0.9, indicating some positive effect.

These results seem to indicate that the principals thought the program was more beneficial to the beginning teacher and to the teaching profession than it was to them personally or to their school as a whole, at least insofar as the attributes of the effective school were concerned.

The written comments to these two questions were very positive and supportive of the program. This corresponds to the results of the legislative evaluation of the program about three years ago when a series of hearings were held and no recommendations for change emerged.

A more recent telephone interview with the director of the program (Paul, 1988) provided similar information. There has been no change in

the status of the program. The program is functioning in an acceptable manner and no changes are contemplated.

More detailed information concerning some specific parts of the program is to be found in the study done by McBee and Crawford in 1987. These authors studied entry-year teachers with only consulting teachers working with them as well as entry-year teachers working with the complete Entry-Year Assistance Committee. McBee and Crawford concluded that the EYAC was better than the consultant teacher only program which was the situation for the first two years.

Another part of the picture did emerge from other interviews and conversations with school administrators and school of education personnel. These revealed some concerns and suggestions for improving the implementation of the program. Concerns included: (1) Whether the EYAC members always exercised their best professional judgments; (2) the difficulty in predicting the number of entry-year teachers and consequent problems with faculty workloads in schools of education; (3) the valuable time used by school of education staff in commuting to and from schools; (4) the lack of follow-up data regarding staff development or personal improvement plans made by EYACs for entry-year teachers; and (5) the danger of the program becoming routine and perfunctory. Suggestions for improving the program centered around the amelioration of these factors or issues.

Several things did emerge from the studies which could properly be identified as successes. Most agreed that the EYAC did improve the teacher induction process, that it did improve the beginning teachers through acquisition of effective teaching skills sooner, that it did improve relations between teacher preparation programs, faculty and practitioners in the field, that it was a professional growth experience for participants, and that it had some elements of a practical "fifth year" program.

In summary then, one general conclusion seems to be that the Entry-Year Assistance Program rationale has strong support. To facilitate the induction of new teachers and to make them better teachers sooner is regarded as not only acceptable but praiseworthy because of the resultant benefits for the students, the school, and the profession. A second conclusion is that the program should be kept. The money and time involved are best regarded as investments and not just as expenditures.

A third conclusion is that the program could be improved. Some effort to ensure the quality and consistency of the professional judgments being rendered would be worthwhile, as would be effort spent to collect more information about follow-up programs and second year staff development and personal improvement projects. How to deal with the unpredictability of the number of entry-year teachers and the resulting problems with faculty workloads is still unclear.

The fourth and final conclusion is that the program has produced beneficial results that could be called successes. In addition to the two included with the first conclusion, these include the improvement of relations between colleges of education and elementary and secondary schools, the professional growth experience for the EYAC members, and perhaps some beginnings of a practical "fifth year" program.

Finally, while no great changes in the Entry-Year Assistance Program are being planned at this time, more reform efforts will undoubtedly occur, more swings in the economy will happen, and new pressures and problems are bound to arise. New interests and directions will propel the profession forward. It is said that nothing lasts forever. Some things change and some disappear. Some do both. It is highly doubtful that the Entry-Year Assistance Program is an exception.

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APPENDIX

ENTRY-YEAR TEACHER OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

Entry-Year Teacher's Name _____ Date _____
(print)

Subject/Grade _____ Committee Meeting II or III (circle)

School District _____ Superintendent _____

Assessment by:

Teacher Consultant _____ _____
Print Name School

Administrator _____ _____
Print Name Location

Higher Education _____ _____
Print Name University

_____
Signature, Entry-Year Committee Member

Instructions

This instrument is to be completed by each of the Committee members for Committee Meeting II and III as outlined in the Entry-Year Assistance Program Regulations.

There are four (4) categories to which you are requested to respond: (1) Human Relations, (2) Teaching and Assessment, (3) Classroom Management, and (4) Professionalism. Following each category, e.g., Human Relations, there are several descriptive statements indicating some of the characteristics and/or behaviors to be considered in formulating your overall written response to the category.

Please address strengths, concerns, and recommendations under the four categories.

I, the Entry-Year Teacher, have discussed the narrative of this assessment with the Entry-Year Assistance Committee.

Comments:

SAMPLE

Signature _____ Signature _____
Chairperson Date Entry-Year Teacher Date

I. Human Relations

A. Reacts with sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others.
B. Helps students build self-awareness and a positive self-concept.
C. Provides positive reinforcement to students.
D. Interacts and communicates effectively with parents and staff.
E. Treats students firmly and fairly while maintaining respect for their worth as individuals.
F. Develops and maintains rapport with students.
G. Helps students to understand and accept their similarities and differences.
H. Shows awareness of the growth and development patterns characteristic of the group taught.
I. Exhibits a sense of humor.
J. Attempts to include all class members in classroom activities.
K. Accepts and/or uses ideas of students.

Strengths:

Concerns:

SAMPLE

Recommendations:

II. Teaching and Assessment

A. Organizes time, resources, and materials for effective instruction.
B. Makes a clear and adequate explanation of material presented and procedures followed, and teacher expectations for student involvement.
C. Implements a variety of instructional strategies to motivate students.
D. Encourages class participation through interaction with students and feedback.
E. Recognizes and uses opportunities for impromptu teaching.
F. Utilizes valid testing techniques based on the identified objectives.
G. Exhibits enthusiasm for the subject matter.
H. Demonstrates initiative and responsibility in changing situations.

Strengths:

Concerns:

SAMPLE

Recommendations:

III. Classroom Management

A. Maintains classroom discipline.
B. Handles disruptive students effectively.
C. Treats students fairly.
D. Provides an environment conducive to learning.
E. Teacher and students have accessibility to materials and supplies.
F. Physical arrangement of room is attractive and safe as circumstances permit.
G. Teacher makes an effort to include all students through participation, eye contact, and feedback.
H. Students and teacher are courteous and respectful to one another.
I. Gives clear, explicit directions to students.
J. Teacher is careful for the safety of the student.

Strengths:

SAMPLE

Concerns:

Recommendations:

IV. Professionalism

A. Maintains a friendly, cooperative, and helpful relationship with other employees.
B. Exhibits leadership by sharing knowledge and techniques with other faculty.
C. Works effectively as a member of an educational team.
D. Demonstrates evidence of professional demeanor, scholarship, and behavior.
E. Effectively expresses self in written and verbal communication using correct grammar and appropriate vocabulary.
F. Demonstrates appropriate behavior and composure in a variety of situations.
G. Uses current educational theories and practices.

Strengths:

Concerns:

SAMPLE

Recommendations: